Two Reformers: Zwingli and Calvin | Switzerland Tourism

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Intro

The Reformation in Switzerland involved various centres and reformers. A major role was played by Ulrich Zwingli, who was active from 1523 in Zurich, and John Calvin, who from 1536 transformed Geneva into what was called the "Protestant Rome".

Ulrich (or Huldrych) Zwingli, 1484-1531

Ulrich Zwingli came from a rich **Toggenburg** (eastern Switzerland) **farming family. His parents had enough money to provide Ulrich with an excellent education. He had a gift for languages and could read the Bible in both the Greek and the Hebrew original. After he had survived the catastrophe of Marignano and the plague, and regarded the Bible as being the most important measure of religious matters, he carried out a reform of the church in Zurich from 1519 which led to the establishment of the Reformed Church. Zwingli preached against the veneration of images, of relics and of the saints, and also opposed celibacy and the Eucharist. He tried to spread his Reformation throughout Switzerland, and as a politician he dreamed of a strengthened confederation of the Reformed faith. One of his major successes was the introduction of the new faith in his hometown of Zurich in 1528. At that time, Zurich was on the side of the Franco-German coalition against the Habsburgs and the Pope – and the introduction of the Reformation can also be viewed from this political aspect. Zurich's example was later followed by Basel, Schaffhausen and St. Gallen as well as Bern. The introduction of the Reformation was largely successful in Appenzell, Glarus and the Three Leagues and also in Thurgau, in the Rhine Valley and the Abbey of St. Gall.**
Zwingli died in 1531 in a fight against Catholic soldiers from central Switzerland.

Jean Calvin, 1509-1564

Jean Calvin was a Frenchman who came to Geneva in 1536 for the first time after

he had broken with the Roman Catholic Church. Geneva at the time was not yet part of the Confederation, but had close relations with Bern and Zurich.
In 1538, Calvin left Geneva when the population revolted against his strict moral standards. However, in 1541 his followers took him back and he continued his work of reformation. Although his attitude had not changed, he acted more effectively and he now succeeded in persuading the government of his principles: Calvin advocated **hard work** and stated that wealth was a **reward from God**. This philosophy favoured the development of modern capitalism. Calvin advocated a good education in **science** and **art**, and also promoted **handcrafts** and **trade**, which led to Geneva becoming a thriving city.

Geneva under Calvin's influence

Calvin's work had a great influence on Geneva. His attempt to transfer power to the clergy left no one indifferent – some were enthusiastic while others found it ridiculous. Geneva was even mockingly nicknamed "**Hieropolis**" (the holy city). The character of Geneva changed considerably under Calvin, not only because of the new **form of government** which he introduced, but also because of the huge influx of **refugees** from countries such as France, Italy, the Netherlands and England as the persecution of Protestants increased in Europe. These newcomers tended to be supporters of Calvin, and as such caused resentment among many native Genevans, who saw them as a threat to their own influence. However, in 1555 an uprising against them by the established Genevans was put down.

Some of the refugees were trained for the ministry, and spread Calvin's teaching. They included **John Knox**, founder of the Church of Scotland.

Since the refugees included many printers and publishers, they made a great contribution to the spread of Reformation thought. The "**Académie de Genève**" (now a university) was founded in 1559. The academy, with its theological and humanistic seminar, attracted many students to Geneva.

The refugees who came to Geneva during the Reformation also included many **craftsmen, bankers** and other professionals who contributed much to the development of the city.
Duke Charles-Emmanuel I of Savoy made a final attempt to recover Geneva in 1602, but a night-time attack on the city was foiled by the citizens. The incident is known as the **Escalade**, after the ladders used by Savoyard troops to scale the city walls.

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